

FREEDOM

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COMMUNE OF PARIS

A Speech delivered by P. Kropotkine
at South Place Institute, March 18, 1891.

Three separate periods must be distinguished in the history of the Commune: the first week before the elections; the two months of Communal rule; and the last ten days of popular rising - the bloody week." During the first and last we see the people at work. The middle is a period of Parliamentary government.

The first week is a period of great enthusiasm. The Government is overthrown. Paris is free. She will follow her own line, of development. If the country follows her, much the better; but if not, she will organise herself as she likes.

The greatest hopes are roused in the down trodden masses by the new condition .. It is a popular movement, without orders from above, without direction. One of the most radical revolutions in history has been accomplished.

The revolutionary leaders, however, do not believe in the movement. They follow it because they are leaders, but without putting their hearts into it. They will remain true to it, to the last, to the bitter end. They will die like heroes. But they do not share the hopes of the Masses, and what makes the movement great, like a great festival of emancipation, is the part taken in it by the whole population - that intelligent, artistic populace full of hope.

For the next two months, the people disappear. They have their government and leave it to arrange everything.

The government is the most democratic imaginable. Workers, working-class leaders, political revolutionaries well known for their hatred of the Imperial rule and the rule of Versailles, are gathered in the Counsel of the Commune. They are honest, they are devoted to the Revolution.

But what a frightful confusion in this heterogenous assemblage gathers in the Hotel de Ville. Like all revolutionary governments be they elected or self-nominated--the Government of the Commune stands with one foot in the past, and the other in the future. Even those who look into the future do not trust it, they are timid, and, what is worse, they are Overpowered by those who belong to the past.

The city is without work. The workshops are silent, food is scarce and prices high. What must they do?

Think of the million or so of people who have trusted their destinies to them! Feed them! Lodge them! Think of food supplies when those in stock are exhausted! But the majority of the government are men of the past, and they never have thought of that great problem, the problem of bread for the masses. They have fought in politics. They have fought against Imperial oppression, against forms of

government. They never have once thought how one million people live, work, produce and consume. Political liberty is all they know about. Food with them is a secondary question.

And when the minority intends doing something to push forward the social problem they are told by the majority: "Not now! Not under the Prussian guns! Not in the face of a Versailles army!" But when then if not precisely at this moment! And the minority spend the precious days, and weeks in trying to convert the majority. Or they discuss the political measures which the majority presses upon them. Majority rule overrules them in the Council of the Commune.

Remark, I do not criticise the majority or the minority. If I speak it is for the future. The question is not whether the Commune was right or not, but what we shall have to do if we are in a similar movement.

We know what the Authoritarian Socialist would say. He would say that the minority ought to have made a new coup d'etat, a new change of Government within the Commune: called the people to arms, overthrown the majority of politicians, arrested them, taken their place. So the Jacobin, did in 1793, when they overthrew the Girondists.

But that was impossible. That would have meant war within the Commune in the face of the German and Versailles enemies-ready to advantage of any dissention within the walls.

Our answer is quite different. What men of initiative have to do when a like opportunity occurs is to remain with the people. They have no business in a Council. Among the masses their initiative will be a thousand times more powerful than if they had been mewed up in a Revolutionary Government. The masses, as I just said, were during the first weeks, inspired by some vague foresight of the future. They expected from the Commune a new move, an attempt at least at solving the great problem of Bread for All. It was to aid the masses to make this next move that the energies of any man of initiative ought to have been devoted; to provoke in the masses a conception of what must be done to solve that question; and leaving unnoticed the rulers in the Communal House, the men with the red scarf, to start amidst the masses: and within the masses the work which might have been a new departure towards a Socialist future.

They did not do it. They did not feel the necessity of the move. They had not yet parted with the idea of Government. They were not Anarchist enough to be revolutionary. They were not Socialist enough to care for the Bread for All above all grand and beautiful things. They were children of the last century's Great Revolution,

the Middle-Class Revolution, not of the Revolution of the Nineteenth Century, not of the popular Revolution of our times. That Revolution itself had not sufficiently ripened in men's minds.

The defeat Of the Commune was certain. She could not conquer, surrounded as she was by two armies, Prussian and French, joining hands before the common enemy-the Hydra of Socialism.

But the defeat might have been less crushing. But the legacy of the Commune might have been greater than it was.

If the defeat was so crushing and the legacy to future generations so small, as we must frankly admit it was, this was because the Commune was not Communistic enough, because the Commune was not Anarchist enough.

Socialist she was to a certain extent; but her Socialism was that Socialism which, is now patronized by the middle-classes, the Socialism which simply works to diminish the hours of labour and to increase the wages of labour, without attacking capitalist rule at the root-the Wage System.

Anarchist she was to some extent - against the State. She did not recognise the supremacy of a National Parliament. She was Anarchist too in the manner in which the people undertook her defense. Some free scope to popular initiative was left; and the battalions of the Federalists when they went to the fortifications, Were simply a population in arms.

But the Commune was not Communist. She had not risen to the idea that everyone has the right to live, to have food and shelter. And she was not Anarchist enough to understand that the only salvation of the great city was in the popular initiative.

France had been defeated by the Germans, not because of the superiority of the German Organisation, as State Socialists say, but because she had no fighters to oppose the German millions of invaders, no inspiration amongst her defenders.

The Commune repeated the same error. She had no fighters and not the inspiration which might have trebled the numbers. She had to fight the Versailles hands; but there are two methods of warfare. The warfare organised from above, by officers and chiefs, and popular warfare.

The Commune took to the first, she only tolerated the second. But even when the people did go and fight, their improvised military commanders were meddling all the time, and paralysing the popular efforts.

The months of Communal rule are the dullest, and most unproductive in revolutionary history. Not one single great idea coming to the front. Not one act of greatness. The government of the Commune hardly differs from any government engaged in the military defence of a city. And if it were not for the last week of the life of the Commune, when the people of Paris rose again with the same enthusiasm as during the first week, we should never have come together to celebrate the Anniversary of the Commune.

You know what that last week was. As soon as the news spread that the Versailles army had entered Paris, the people undertook themselves the defense of the, city in their own suburbs.

"Enough of galoons!" Delescluse wrote in his memorable proclamation. "Enough of gold embroidered military caps! Place for the people!"

And the people took their place. The big barricades erected in the centre of Paris by the would-be military geniuses of the Commune were abandoned. They could not be defended at all. And the workers, with their wives and children, fought like lions behind improvised barricades not higher than a man's breast.

This was again the people of Paris in their desperate battle against the middle classes; and were it not for this fight, unorganised, free, full of personal initiative and heroism, without chiefs and without gold embroidered caps, we should never have come together to commemorate that Revolution.

It is considered good taste not to speak of the horrors which the middle-classes perpetrated when they retook Paris; of the pools, the ponds of workers' blood, which they did shed, of the cold-blooded massacres of thousands of prisoners by means of the mitraille use: of how they shot the wounded in their beds.

But we must speak of that. We must remember it, because you, workers, must know that if you make the most insignificant rising, you will be shot and murdered and tortured in the same way if you do not succeed in abolishing middle-class rule.

Remember well, that in case of your defeat, the middle-classes will revenge upon you-not what you will have done, but what they will have feared that you might have done.

Seize their property or not, you will be treated As if you had seized it. Destroy their wealth or lot, you will be shot down as if you had destroyed it.

So the future Commune had better seize that property at once. Seize it and use it for the common well-being; for giving to all human beings without exception, a road to the great harmonious development of mankind which they will find ill common work, in common organisation of labour, in full freedom-in Anarchist Communism, in a word.

FREEDOM AND PROPERTY. III.

We have glanced at the claims to the personal ownership of things conferred by need and by use, there remains yet for consideration the claim bestowed by creation, the claim of the producer to the produce, of the maker to the work of his hand and brain. In the true nature of this claim and its relation to the other two lies the whole crux of the property question, in so far as it is to be determined by justice rather than by brute force. We agreed that the claims of Deed and list would be admitted by free men in a free society; but is it not the merest mockery to speak of freedom and not to recognise to the full the ownership of the creator in his creation? As individuality has grown with human development and men have learned to recognise themselves as, distinct personalities rather than sections of a tribe or family, the claim of the individual producer to dispose of what he has himself produced has grown up into a generally recognised right, one (of the axioms of fair dealing between man and man. Such Commonplace phrases as 'A man has a right to what he can get by his work,' "He has fairly earned so-and-so and the hundred similar expressions in every day use, all ring the changes, more or less ambiguously, on the same generally accepted idea, i.e., that if a man makes a thing he has a right to have it. If we look closely at the disputed points in the question of economic distribution in

England during the last thousand years, we shall observe that the matter at issue between the dominant and subject classes was not whether the producer had a genuine claim to the produce, but who took the most important share in the existence of the produce to be divided. "We," said the feudal lords to the craftsmen and burghers and serfs, "without our protection you could produce nothing, or, at least, could keep none of it for yourselves; therefore, we claim the lion's share." "We," say file capitalists of to-day to their wage-slaves, "for if we had not risen up and taken the initiative in utilising the discoveries and inventions of the last two hundred and fifty years, if we had not ventured upon striking out new methods of working, and taking the risks of untried industrial enterprises; further, if we had not organised and controlled your labour you could never produce one-thousandth part of what you do ; therefore we take the lion's share."

And if there had not been a grain of truth in both these pretentious, if feudal lords and capitalist employers had always been simply anti wholly robbers, taking from the producers the greater part of what they produced by sheer violence or mere fraud, then the mass of the English people under feudalism and under capitalism would have been nothing but a subject population, crushed and ground down under the heel of a conquering and better-armed minority, like the people of Ireland have been, or those of Egypt under the Turkish Suzerainty, or those of Poland under Russia. But bad as our social conditions have been, and are, they have not paralleled the degradation of a conquered race under a despotism, for they have been founded, to a Certain extent, upon mutual agreement; so that while there is scarcely a true-born Irish Celt who would not turn every English ruler out of his country to-day, if he could, there are an enormous number of British workmen who do not yet see, or only are beginning to have the faintest inkling, how the nation could get on, without employers of labour; very much as, at one time, a large number of peacefully-inclined producers did not see how they could get on without putting themselves under the wing of some fighting baron. By the way, the same timorousness of spirit still survives, without the same excuse, in those persons who in our more civilised days cannot be happy without paying taxes to support, Government to protect them. But to return.

If a theoretical recognition of the claim of the producer to what he produces is, and has for a long time been, general amongst all fair minded men, so that it has become a truism of our everyday morality, and is even traceable in such a relation as that between employer and employed, how does it happen that we have not already seen this claim in its true bearing upon the social problem? How is it that we still calmly submit to a system of distribution so unequal and unfair as to deprive the mass of the producers of all the higher enjoyments of life and leave millions of hard-working men and women in abject, hopeless misery, whilst much of the enormous wealth they are creating finds its way into the hands of persons producing nothing! How is it that we see one member of a producing group get a share of the produce of the common labour of that group go wholly and ludicrously out of proportion to that of his fellow-workers, that he and his descendants in after generations live in splendour and frequently in absolute idleness, as far as production is concerned, whilst his fellow-producers and their descendants continue to toil

laboriously and live hardly? How is it that whilst our popular morality and common sense acknowledge the justice of the claim of the producer to ownership in the produce, we have continued until now to acquiesce in a system whereby the greater part of the producers have nothing at all to do with the disposal of their productions!

The individual worker, of course, submits because, whether or no lie realises that he is being wronged, he cannot resist the men who having monopolised land and capital, art, protected in their monopoly by the armed force of the Government; but why have the community at large quietly sat down under Such flagrant public injustice, when, if they had seen this monstrous inequality in its true light, not all the vested interests and class prejudices in Society could have hindered a violent and successful agitation against so gross a form of robbery?

We believe the main cause has been the dust thrown in honest men's eyes by the wage-system. The wage-workers themselves have been so mystified and confused by the jugglery (if this abominable device that they have lost sight altogether of the fact that they are producers of things to which if they had not contracted themselves out of their freedom, they would have a personal claim. They have grown to look that of a hireling engaged on the condition of it hand-worker-is necessarily to do the bidding of a master at so much the hour. They have grown so accustomed to work, not for the sake of making something they or some else wants, but only for the sake of money wage, that finally they have come to imagine that their wages actually do represent the produce of their labour or some part of it, and their one aim is not to be their own master, but merely to increase the amount falling to their lot. A point of view agreeable to the wage-savers, who, as a class, have always aimed at securing the assistance of obedient slaves rather than intelligent co-operatives in their industrial enterprises. Herein lies the initial wrong of the Capitalist system: the wrong which every man commits when desiring the assistance of another human being for any purpose, he takes advantage of that persons necessities to induce him too sell his bodily energies to him, instead of asking his voluntary co-operation and sharing with him as a brother the advantages anti ([["advantages of the undertaking.

For wages do not represent the wage-receiver's claim to what he produces. They are the bribe he receives to induce him to resign that claim. They are the price paid at the market Tate for so much applied human activity, just the same as it might be paid for steam power or machinery. Wages are not a share of the finished product, they are an advance made by the monopolist of the means of production from the store of social wealth he has appropriated; an advance of much the same nature As Jacob made to Esau when, being himself well supplied with provisions, he found his elder brother starving in the desert and persuaded him to sell his birthright for an immediate mess of potage Like Esau, the wage-slave sells his birthright as a free worker, his claim to-what he produces, that he may supply his immediate necessities, and the bargain is a disgrace to wage-giver and wage-receiver. We look upon it as a disgraceful bargain when a woman sells her body to work the will of another person, disregarding her own will and personal inclinations; we cry shame on the man who, taking advantage of the desperate needs of a fellow-creature, is the buyer of such`h a commodity. He may pay his slave ill or well, but whatever he pays, the

transaction is essentially inhuman and vile, a degradation to the common humanity of both parties. But we have lost, or have not yet gained, the feeling that a hireling, a man or woman who sells their labour force is also concluding a shameful bargain, is selling their birthright of freedom, is selling their own creative power of brain, nerve, and muscle, to work the will of another; is selling, in fine, their claim as producers to all they produce during the term of the contract. A wage-slave has no control over the articles he makes, no voice in their disposal. For the nonce, he is merely a motor and a self-adjusting machine, not a man, not a distinct free human personality, gifted with will and initiative and a capacity for shaping his own activity to fulfil his own desires and work out his own purposes.

This shameful system of bondage has assumed such gigantic proportions during the last hundred years, and laid such paralyzing hands upon the initiative, the dignity, the sense of personal responsibility of the workers, has imposed so arbitrary and unnatural a relation between the worker and big work and vitiated to so terrible a degree the sense of justice between man and man, that it is absolutely needful to tear down its flimsy pretexts and lay it bare. for what it really is, before approaching the discussion of the claim of the producer to the produce, As it would appear to free men in a free society.

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A TALK ABOUT ANARCHIST COMMUNISM BETWEEN TWO WORKERS.

By Enrico Malatesta.

(Continued from previous number.)

Jack. You're right, William, to think the machines one cause of poverty and loss of work; but that happens because they belong to the rich. If they belonged to the workers, it would be just the other way; they would be the principal cause of human comfort. For all machines only work in our place and faster than we do. Thanks to machinery man will not be obliged to toil for long hours to satisfy his needs, will not be condemned to painful exertion exceeding his physical strength. This is why, if machinery were applied to all branches of production and belonged to every one, a few hours of light and easy work would suffice for all the needs of consumption and each worker would have time to gain knowledge, to keep up social relations in a word, to live and enjoy life, profiting by all the conquest, of science and civilisation.

Remember that what we have to do is to take possession of the machines, not destroy them. You way

be sure the owner, will do just as much to defend their machines against those who want to destroy as against those. who try to take possession of them; therefore, as there will be the same effort to make and the same risk to run in either case, it will be a downright folly to break rather than Like the machines. Would you destroy corn and houses if they could be shared by all? Surely not! Well, we must do the same with the machine for if in the bands of employers they are instrumental to our poverty and servitude, in our hands they will become instrumental to wealth and freedom.

William. But if things are to go well under such a system, everybody must be willing to work.

Jack. Of course.

William. And suppose there are some folks that would like to live without working? Toil is a hardship, even dogs don't like it.

Jack. You confuse society as it is to-day with society is it will be after the Revolution. You say that even dogs don't enjoy toil; but could you spend whole days doing nothing?

William. I? No, because I'm accustomed to work. When I've nothing to do my hands seem to itch to be after something; but there are folks who would stay all day long at the public house playing cards or lounge about with their hands in their pockets.

Jack. Now-a-days, but not after the Revolution, and I will tell you why. Now-a-days work is disagreeable, ill-paid and looked down upon. Now-a-days the working man must lag himself nearly to death or be half-starved, and he is treated like a beast of burden, The working man has no hope; he knows that ten to one he will end his days in the workhouse. He can't attend to his family as he ought and he has scarcely any enjoyment in his life, while he continually suffers ill-treatment and humiliation, On the other hand, the man who does not work takes his ease in every possible way; he is looked up to and esteemed; all men and all pleasures are at his service.

Even amongst working men, those who do least and whose work is the least disagreeable earn most and are thought more of than the others. Is it to be wondered at that folks are disgusted with work and are eager to seize any opportunity to do nothing I But when work is done under conditions fit for human beings, for a reasonable time and according to the laws of health; when the worker know that he is working for the well-being of his family and of all men; when every one who wishes to be respected must necessarily be a worker and the lazy are as much despised as are spies and procuresses, to-day; who will then wish to forego the joy of knowing himself useful kind beloved that lie may live in :in idleness disastrous alike to his body and his mind? Even now-a-days, every body, apart some rare exceptions, instinctively loathes the idea of being a spy or a procurers.

And yet by these vile callings more can be gained than by digging the ground; there is little or no work and More or less State protection. But as these trades are reckoned abominable, nearly every one prefers poverty to

the infamy of following them there are exceptions there are weak, degraded creatures who prefer infamy but this is because their choice lies between infamy and poverty. But who would choose an infamous and contemptible life when by working he could secure comfort and public esteem? Certainly such a man would be mad. And there is no doubt that this public reprobation of idleness would arise and make itself felt, for work is essentially needful to society. Idle folks would not only harm everyone by living on what others produced without contributing their own work to supply the wants of the community, but also break the harmony of the new order of things, and become the elements of a discontented party, who might desire a return to the part.

Collective bodies are like individuals; they love and admire what is or what they think of use, and hate and despise what they know or believe to be hurtful. They may be deceived and too often they are; but in the case before us no mistake is possible, for it is clear as daylight that the person who does not work, eats and drinks, at the expense of others and is wronging everybody. Why, suppose you join a party of men to do some work all together and share and share alike in the produce; of course you will be considerate to any of your mates who may be weak or unskillful, but as for a mere shirker will he not be led such a life that he will take, himself off or else feel inclined to set his shoulder to the wheel? That is just what will happen in the community at large if the laziness of some of its members threatens to become serious danger. If we could not go ahead because of those, who would not work, which to me seems very unlikely, the remedy would, after all, not be far to seek; they would simply be turned out of the community. Then, as they would have a right to nothing but raw material and the instruments of labour, they would be forced to work if they wished to live.

William. You are beginning to convince me; but tell me, will everybody have to work in the fields?

Jack. Why should they? Men do not need only bread and beer and meat. We want houses and clothes and books and all the things that workers of all sorts of trades produce and no one can by himself supply all his own needs. Even to till the soil, do we not want the help of the blacksmith and the implement maker for our tools, and consequently of the miner who unearths the iron, the mason who builds houses and shops and so forth? It does not follow, therefore, that all must till the ground, only that all must do some useful work. Besides the variety of trades will allow each person to choose what suits him best, and thus, as far as possible, work will be nothing more than exercise, and an ardently desired enjoyment.

William. Then every one will be free to choose any trade he likes?

Jack. Of course. Only we must be careful that some trades are not overstocked whilst others want hands. As we shall be working for the public interest, we must arrange so that everything really necessary is produced whilst individual preferences are consulted. But you will see that will come right when we have no masters to form us to toil for a crust of bread, without knowing what is the object or use of our work.

William. You say it will all come right, but I don't see it. I think that no one will do disagreeable work; they will all be lawyers and doctors. Who will work in the fields? Who will risk his life and health in a mine? Who will go down into the black manhole of the sewers or clean out cesspools?

Jack. Oh, you may leave out the lawyers. Lawyers and priests are a sort of gangrene in society that the revolution will cure. Let us talk about useful work and not about occupations carried on at the expense of one's, neighbours; otherwise we might count the burglar as a worker: he often has plenty of exertion. Now-a-days we prefer one trade to another not because it is more or less in accordance with our tastes and faculties, but because it is easier to learn, because we earn, or hope to earn, more by it, or because we think we shall run the best chance of employment in that line; it is only in the second place that we consider if such and such work is more disagreeable than another sort. In fine, the choice of a trade is mostly imposed upon us by our birth, by chance and by social prejudice. The work of an agricultural labourer, for instance, would not please even the poorest townsman. And yet there is nothing repulsive in agriculture in itself, and life in the fields is not without its pleasures. Very much the contrary; if you read the poets you will see that they are enthusiastic about country life. But the truth is that the poets who write books have very seldom tilled the soil, whilst the farm labourers are worn out with work and half starved, live worse than the beasts and are treated as nobodies, until the poorest wretch in a town would hardly change places with them. How can you expect people to like to be agricultural labourers! Even we who were born in the country, leave it as soon as we can, because whatever we do, we are better off and thought more of elsewhere. But how many of us would wish to leave the country, if we were working there on our own account and could find comfort, freedom and respect in our work? It is just the same in all trade because as things are now, the harder and the more necessary any work is, the worse it is paid, the more it is despised and the more inhuman are the conditions under which it must be done. Go, for example, into a goldsmith's shop and you will find that, in comparison with the wretched holes we live in, the place is clean, well ventilated and warmed, that the working hours are not very long and that though the men are ill paid, for the employer takes the best part of what they produce, still they are well off compared to other workers; they can amuse themselves in the evening; when they take off their working jackets, they can go where they like, with no fear of being stared or sneered at. But if you go into a cutler's workshop, you will see poor fellows knife-grinding there for a miserable wage, in a poisonous atmosphere which will destroy their lives in a few years, and if, after their work, they take the liberty of going where gentlemen are, they will be lucky if they are not made to feel themselves ridiculous. It will not be surprising if, under such circumstances, a man prefers gold working to cutlery. To say nothing of the workers who use no tool but a pen. Just think; a man who only writes bad newspaper articles earns ten times more than a farm labourer and is thought of much more highly. When journalists, engineers, doctors, artists, professors, are in work and know their business well, they live in comfort; but, composers, bricklayers, shoemakers, all sorts of hand-workers, and some poor teachers and other

brain-workers too, are half-starved, whilst they are worked to death. I don't mean to imply that the only useful work is manual work; on the contrary, study is the only way of conquering Nature, becoming civilised, gaining greater freedom and well-being; doctors, engineers, chemists, teachers, are as useful in modern society as farm-labourers and other handworkers. I only mean to say that all useful work should be equally appreciated and so arranged that the worker may find equal satisfaction in doing it; and also that intellectual work, being a great pleasure in itself, and giving the man who does it a great superiority over those who remain in ignorance, should be put within the reach of every one and not remain the privilege of a few.

(To be continued.)

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NOTES.

THE LONDON ANARCHISTS CELEBRATE EASTER.

There is a good old custom, far older than the introduction of Christianity of celebrating the springtide of the year by public assemblies and friendly gatherings, an ancient usage still of much practical importance, for it secures the hard-driven workers of to-day a moment's breathing space for rest and enjoyment. Two London Anarchist Groups resolved this year to utilise the opportunity. The Knights of Liberty, an East End Group of workers, initiated the idea of a Conference on Easter Sunday, to which all Anarchist Groups, English and foreign should be invited. The Freedom Group arranged a social gathering for Easter Eve. Unfortunately times have been so extra bad lately that in many country groups there was no one able to afford a trip to London, the too scanty common funds of the groups being entirely eaten up by the necessities of local propagandist work: circumstances which gave 'a sort of monopoly value to comrades who managed to come tip from Norwich and Leicester, and another proof, if one were needed, of the unfree condition of the wage-slaves of "free" England.

THE LONDON INTERNATIONAL ANARCHIST CONGRESS

A well attended meeting of Anarchists, including members of London and Provincial English groups, Germans, Italians, and Frenchmen, was HELD on Easter Sunday at the Autonomie Club. The question of what should be the action of English Anarchists on the First of May was discussed at considerable length. The opinion was generally expressed that Anarchists all over the country ought not to miss the opportunity of making good Anarchist propaganda on the First as well as on the Third of May, but should hold public meetings in common with their fellow workers on the Continent, and explain to the people the real meaning of the May Demonstration. It was agreed that a leaflet setting forth the Anarchist position on the subject should be got out for distribution, and 16s. was collected towards the expenses of producing the same. It was also agreed to send a message of greeting and solidarity to the congress to be held at Milan on the 12th of April.

OUR SOCIAL EVENING

More than a hundred comrades assembled on the evening of March 28th in the tipper chamber of a City coffee tavern, to enjoy the pleasure of each other's society, to renew old friendships and form new ones, to gain inspiration, in an interchange of opinion and in comradeship, for the work lying before us. A glance round the large room, with its pleasant little tea tables, each brightened by the music of friendly talk, showed Germans and Frenchmen from the Autonomie in conversation with Englishmen from the provinces, Jewish Comrades from Berner Street, laughing and talking with members of the Italian group, the Editor of the Herald of Anarchy in amicable discussion with one of the Freedom staff, friends from Hammersmith Socialist Society, the London Socialist League, the Individualist Anarchist League, all cordially

mingling with Anarchist Communists from every group in London. William Morris, from his Sick room, sent a pencil note, regretting his enforced absence. R. Burnie, the new editor of the Commonweal, was also prevented from being present by illness. After tea, Comrades Blackwell, Kropotkine, and Louise Michel made informal speeches. Kropotkine, in view of the next day's Conference, said a few impressive words about the coming 1st 'May. He pointed out that unless the workers all over Europe, and in Great Britain, were unanimous in their Demonstrations that day, they would carry no weight with them. The English workers, if they meant anything, should not wait for the 3rd of May to come out in their thousands. Sunday demonstrations would not tell the capitalists what they ought to know, that the workers had a right to take it holiday when it so pleased them.

There was no fear of the Capitalists combining to make a universal lock out if there was a universal coming out on the 1st May, because the universal lock-out would be nothing less than the Social Revolution, Songs were then sung by various friends, including C. Morton, N. E. Tipping, Mrs. Tochatti, and other members of the Hammersmith Choir, &c., and a violin solo was given charmingly by Comrade Marsh. The proceedings were further enlivened by recitations from Gunderson, Jun., and others. So passed a social evening which, we hope, will not be the last of its kind.

A SUCCESSFUL CONCERT.

Another very useful and pleasant gathering was the concert arranged by Comrade, Wess at the Berner Club for the benefit of the Freedom Pamphlet Fund. Comrade Marsh and other musical friends gave their services. E. Nesbit (Mrs. Bland) and Marshall Steele recited, and the evening concluded with a sing-song and dance. In spite of dreadful weather, the sale of programme- cleared L2 16s., a sum which, with the prepaid Orders sent in by the Autonomie, Knights of Liberty, and other groups, has paid the cost of Freedom Pamphlet -No. 2, stereos and all, and left us a small balance towards No. 3.

"THE ROLE OF AN" OFFICIAL."

"(1)To do nothing. (2) To prevent any one else from doing anything. (3) To invent reasons for (1) and (2). No. 3 involves work and ingenuity, and it is quite astonishing to see what energy can be employed at times to secure No. 2." So writes J. S. P. to the Times for March 27 apropos of Mr. Raikes and the Boy Messengers. We congratulate J.S.P. on his insight.

A PILL FOR THE STATE SOCIALISTS.

The sight of the Post Office invoking all the machinery of law to crush the Boy Messengers, because the members of that audacious society have actually dared to perceive a public need and on their own initiative set about supplying it, is wholesome medicine for those persons whose Socialism takes the form of a desire to make all branches of industry into State monopolies. barring the pitiful salaries of its wage-slaves, the Post Office has been the stock illustration employed by argumentative Social Democrats, when they would turn us from the error of our

convictions with regard to the danger of officialism, the repressive tendencies of red tape, and the need for free individual initiative in matters economic. Mr. Raikers' object lesson will save us some expenditure of breath in future. Imagine a country in which every branch of industry and distribution was under the control of Raikes and Co., and all voluntary associations to supply public needs sternly repressed by law, and you will have some idea of the Millenium whither the path of humanity will be opened by the Fabian blow (when struck).

A HALTING DEFENCE.

Some over-zealous Social Democrats, determined not to be beaten, are suggesting that Mr. Raikes is a public benefactor after all; for if he quashes the Boy "Messenger Company and himself employs urchins to run errands for the public instead, said urchins will be transformed, as they grow tip, into letter carriers, and so for life be provided for with the munificence peculiar to the State, whereas the private company will turn them adrift as mere unskilled labourers.

An argument which, like the proverbial swimming pig, cuts its own throat; for if the Post Office requires a larger number of letter-carriers than can be supplied from the boys at present in its employ, and does not increase its staff of boys by taking over the messenger business, it will be obliged to engage grown wage-slaves from outside, and amongst these the messengers who have outgrown their boyhood will have a fine chance, in consequence of their knowledge of town and practice in deciphering and tracing out addresses, unless Mr. Raikes sacrifices superior. fitness to avenge his dignity, in which extreme case the boys' acquirements will stand them in good stead in gaining a livelihood by the many distributive agencies to which the Post Office still deigns to grant the boon of existence. We defend no company for private exploitation, but an exploiting State monopoly is even worse, if worse can be.

THE QUEEN r. JACKSON, MAN v. WIFE, SLAVERY v. LIBERTY

The extraordinary decision of the -Judges of Appea in the Jackson ease, has very much upset the minds of orthodox husbands, and bewildered their still more orthodox spouses. Never was greater back-hander given to law and authority by law and authority! A woman by the simple expression of her will sets at naught a form of legal contract, which centuries of use had made the world regard with superstitious awe, and the highest legal authorities of the land back her up in a decision, which renders the word "husband," in its ancient legal sense, -a scorn and a bye-word.

Marriage by legally enforced contract was .some stages removed from the rapes of Savage tribes; the present refusal of the law to violently enforce the contract is a significant sign of the growing conviction that union between men and women should depend solely on free consent. The man who would compel a woman by brute force to mate with him should take himself off to those parts of Uncivildom, where wooing is still done by means of a club, and the nuptial knot can be pulled to strangulation point by the self-appointed lord and master.

THERE IS ONLY ONE WAY LEFT.

Mr. Jackson ran only save himself from life-long ridicule by imitating his recalcitrant wife in her defiance of legality. He says his only compliant now is that he cannot marry anyone else. If he can get any woman to have him, we should advise him to go through the ceremony and abide the issues. In that, way he might drive yet another wedge into the crumbling edifice of legal marriage and render his former partner's rebellion more fruitful.

IRSEN'S "GHOSTS" SCARE THE PIOUS JOURNALIST.

It would seem as if the spirit of Anarchy had been very much rife (hiring the tint quarter of '91. Mr. Grein's opening venture at the Royalty (for the nonce Independent) Theatre, Dean Street, on 'March 13, was in direct defiance of the Lord Chamberlain, who had refused to license the playing of Ibsen's 11 Ghosts." But individual will and subscriptions carried the day, or rather the night, and the play was splendidly given before a crowded audience. After the performance the Journalists howled loud and long, and told us that this faithful portrayal of some sordid features of this sordid age, was an outrage upon decency, and foreboded the downfall of dramatic art. Few, if any, of Ibsen's most ardent admirers set up his style or subject-matter as artistic standards. He himself says he writes -with but one object, "to make men think," and perhaps the term of "dramatic pamphleteer" is a more happy expression than the originator of it meant it to be. This, however, is certain, that there can be only one kind of human being who can see immorality or obscenity in an Ibsen play and that kind is the one we hope will some day have become as extinct as the dodo.

IS OSCAR, TOO, AMONG THE ANARCHISTS?

The February Fortnightly Review contained an Article from the pen of Oscar Wilde which might well evoke this question. Wherever -Mr. Wilde studied Socialism, he has succeeded in taking the cream off the various schools, and he is to be congratulated upon his assimilation of what must have been to him very strong meat. The neat, incisive sentences are like so many skilful sword-thrusts. Most of them are dealt for the liberty of Art, but, to Mr. Wilde, Art is inseparable from life. He strikes, too, at the cramps of Law and authority, which hinder our social progress, and at that still more terrible fetter of the soul, "Public Opinion." The only Objectionable feature in the essay is the attempt to read into the teachings of Christ the spirit of our own age. Whatever Christ taught or meant by his teachings, we may be sure that we have got on to something further, else were he, and his teachings of small avail.

FABIAN FUSSES.

Our friends the Fabians have been wonderfully energetic these past few months. They have split up into independent groups, having found that their increase of numbers made a harmonious working under a central executive an impossibility. Still the executive has clung to its existence, and although in reality a thing "of shreds and patches" whose authority is but a jest, it continues to distribute work, and has set the various groups to the

congenial task of redrafting old pamphlets. (The Fabians always drop back on old pamphlets as a last resource.) The Government superstition is also kept up in the form of group secretaries, whose duties consist of giving tea-parties to their respective groups and creating local fusses. The society now numbers several thousands, and the chief secretary, we hear, has struck for increased pay. In fact, the popularity of the society is not altogether a thing desired of the original members. Subscriptions are one thing, but lecturers "whose worth's unknown" is quite another, and the executive An, anxiously hunting round for a member who will undertake to Attend all the lectures of the neophytes, in. mufti And report upon them to headquarters.

THE COMMUNE COMMEMORATION

AT SOUTH PLACE.

If a densely crowded meeting and sustained enthusiasm are criterions of a successful meeting, the gathering at South Place Institute on the eighteenth of March, convened by the Anarchist groups of London, must be considered as pre-eminently successful. Moreover it was one of the most international meetings ever held in this or any other country, speeches being delivered in the English, French, German, Italian, Russian and Yiddish languages. Before the speaking began there was a brisk sale of Freedom, Die Autonomic, The Workers' Friend, Herald of Anarchy, Commonweal, Free Russia, The Anarchist Labour Leaf and other revolutionary and Anarchist papers. A very large number of the Dew pamphlet, "The Commune of Paris" was also disposed of, besides a good many copies of "Law and Authority," "The Wage, System," and other Communist and Anarchist pamphlets in English and German.

One of the most pleasing things about these commemoration meetings is the great number of old familiar faces one sees. Comrades whose life and work lies apart throughout the year gather together on the occasion of such a meeting as this, and unite in keeping up the annual celebration. The South Place meeting was no exception to the general rule. Some of us noticed many old friends and comrades with whom it has been our pleasure to work for the cause of Socialism in the past and whom we had not seen since the last South Place meeting.

Of course, as is customary at Anarchist gatherings, we dispensed with the authority of the chair and the stupid practice of passing resolutions. The result was that the meeting was; throughout a striking example of the order which results from an absence of government, the only interruptions experienced by the speakers being the applause which greeted the voicing of the common hope for the future.

Speeches were made by J. Blackwell, E. Malatesta, R. Burnie, Trunk, Louise Michel, Prodi, Kropotkine, H. Davis, Yanovsky, and J. Turner.

J. Blackwell pointed out that the reason we celebrate the 18th of March is because we recognise that the people of Paris on that day acted as the advance guard of the army of the workers, and gave out the watchword of the future, setting to up who come after them the task of achieving the workers' liberty. They acted not only for Paris or for France but for every country, and therefore it was that thousands

of similar meetings were being held that night in every part of the world to commemorate their victory of yesterday, and to herald our victory of to-morrow. The Eighteenth of March was a tremendous victory, not only for the workers, but for the Anarchist principle itself, because the people of Paris acted purely on their own individual initiative without any orders from above or preconcerted action. If this victory was not followed up, it was because the Parisians were still dominated by the prejudices of the old society and after destroying one government had foolishly erected another. The Eighteenth of March was a surprise not only to the government which was overthrown but to the workers who took part in the insurrection. In the coming May Day -similar surprises might be in store for us. There would, in all probability, be enormous demonstrations in some places, and huge strikes commenced in others.. If the governments did not lose their heads, probably all would pass over quietly, but it was very likely they would as on the Eighteenth of March commit some stupid act of Oppression which would rouse the wrath of the people, in which case they would be swept away as the middle-class government of Paris had been swept away twenty years ago.

E. Malatesta said that like all revolutionary movements the Commune, contained the germ of the future but this germ had been strangled by the nomination of a government. This government proclaimed territorial decentralisation. Instead of One government in France there would have been 36,000, each of which would be based on the same authoritarian principle. From the Socialist point of view it did nothing. It protected property, and, if it had lasted longer, would have been compelled to act against the people like all other government,.. Nevertheless the Commune had an immense significance. It was not ideas which caused acts but acts which caused ideas. In Italy the Socialist propaganda was started by Bakounine in 1864. He gathered around him about fifteen Socialists and they did not increase in number until the Commune of 1871, but then, through that act, they began to count by thousands.

We are a party of action and we must never forget it. If a great act takes place our number, increase rapidly. If not, the progress is but slow; indeed we are likely to lose ground. Another thing to be learned from the Commune is that we should give great attention to popular movement, -And tendencies. We cannot expect that the people will rise with a definite communist and anarchist programme. A revolution never begins with a settled programme. That of '89 began with cries of "Long live the King." So with regard to the great movement which is now being prepared. The people clamour for eight hours, but eight hours will never be realised, and because their demand is so small that is no reason why we should stand aloof. We must mix with the people and show them how to expropriate and how to attack authority. If we are with the people and share their dangers, they will better understand our ideas and better realize them.

Burnie said that looking back over twenty years, what struck one first was the manner in which the Commune proving as it seemed a failure and quenched in blood, yet had in the highest sense succeeded, since that great act of propaganda had, like all propaganda by deed, made more Socialists than any amount of speaking and writing. It was perhaps well that it faded at the time, since those that

made it, the Parisian people, were still unconscious of the real way to end their misery. Thanks to their unconscious teaching we were learning, all workers were learning, that that misery was only to be ended by, as our comrade Malatesta once expressed it, "putting property in common by a tumultuous Revolution." If in so doing, we used violence, we need not be so timid about the matter as the Communards.

We should only use what violence was necessary to take the rich robber, from our throats. The time through which we were passing was like this month of March, grey, cold and bitter, made so by the robbers, yet summer, the glorious summer After the Revolution, was Surely coming. We might not all see it, but even if we died (if we had the courage) A the struggle, like our martyrs we should know we had not died in vain, but helped in the last and final Revolution which Would give place to the glorious Epoch of Rest.

Trunk expressed his gratification at the growth of Anarchist opinion, as expressed in the fact that this year, such an important and successful meeting had been organised by the Anarchist groups, whereas before. Commune celebrations in London had been held only by Socialists or Social Democrats. The Commune had taken place because the people of Paris felt a longing for freedom and although their attempt had been drowned in blood the ideas continued to progress. He hoped the next revolution would be free from the mistakes which they had made in guarding private property. We must tell the people that, whether they work eight hours (or twelve hours, as long as private property exists they are slaves.

Louise Michel said she believed the coming revolution would be terrible in its force and widespread in its effects. We should remember that we, too, were thieves and oppressors, inasmuch as we possessed food to nourish us and clothes in which we could attend these Commemorative Meetings, whilst outside in the vast city of Loudon were a great mass of fellow creatures unfed and unclad. -No eight hours' day of labour could alleviate the misery that exists. Ali law, all authority must vanish before the people could hope for victory -a victory which meant the Conquest of the whole world; and Internationality was the great force that would carry us to this victory. Long live Internationality!

Prodi said that although twenty years had elapsed since the Paris insurrection, the Commune remained as an example of revolutionary energy and audacity. If we direct as much energy against governments of all kinds and against property, the reign of the exploiters will be at an end.

P. Kropotkine's speech we give in full in another column, as it deals with points just now of special interest in the English Socialist Movement After speaking in English, he said a few words in Russian, warning his countrymen of the futility of's merely constitutional movement to relieve the misery of their unhappy country.

H. Davis, said the aspirations of the Communards were as humane as those of their foes were devilish. The Communards liberated their prisoners. It is to tile many acts of generosity and humanity that some have ascribed their failure, wrongly, for they were merely crushed by superior military force and their humanity was admirable. Compare the peaceful and humanitarian proclamation of the Commune with the bloodthirsty proclamation of the

Versailles (I Government, whose scathing tongue of revenge seems to pierce into the very hearts of the people. The mistakes of the Communards were mistakes we should have made if we had been living then and been in their position; that we may avoid such in the future before us let us prepare for the coming change. Let us educate ourselves, and try to arouse others to do the like, in principles of true freedom, of Anarchy. Let each try to inspire the group with which he lives and works with a belief in the necessity for personal initiative; for organisation may help, but it cannot initiate. The entire destruction of monopoly is the one thing to work for, monopoly bolstered up by military government. Let every worker speak out against government worship, which is a worse superstition than theology, whether his master likes it or not.

Yanovsky, speaking in Yiddish, said that the Commune would have done much if its only result had been to bring about such meetings as this; meetings where workers of all nationalities dropped national prejudice and united to protest against their common foe—Capitalism. The Commune had failed because the world of the workers was not yet ripe to receive and carry out the idea it embodied. The Commune was especially interesting to us as Anarchists because of its spontaneity, because it showed how, when the people are strongly moved, they can act effectively without leaders or organised preparation. Let us see to it that the next outbreak of the Commune, wherever it occurs, may find the workers of the world ready to imitate and support it.

John Turner said, What an eye-opener such a view of the Commune is, that put forward by the speakers to-night must be to any of the audience who might only have heard of it through the lying reports of the capitalist press. Yet even in the Times for 1871 something of the truth might be gleaned by any one who compared the Paris reports with the tone of the leaders commenting thereupon. Since the Commune the ideals of Socialism and free mutual agreement have made vast progress amongst the workers. Some people deprecated Trade Unions, but was it not a fact that they taught the workers to rely on their own strength rather than on government. When the Commune is again proclaimed will it, not be, better for the dockers to work the docks, the gas-workers to control the gas-works, the bakers to manage the bread-making than to intrust the general management of everything to ever such a clever County Council, who will have very little personal acquaintance with any of the matters they vote about.

The meeting was concluded by Mrs. Primer's delightful singing of the "Marseillaise," English version, the audience enthusiastically taking up the chorus.

A letter was read from Comrade Morton regretting, that he was prevented from attending the meeting by illness, and sympathetic telegrams were received from Hull and Sheffield. The collection to defray expenses amounted to £3 0s. 7 1/2d. Reports of other Commune Commemoration Meetings will be found below.

March 17th, the London Socialist League celebrated the Commune of Paris in the Hall in Darner Street. Speakers: Mowbray, Nicoll, Charles, Burnie, Turner, Coulon, and Louise Michel. There was a crowded and enthusiastic audience. The meeting concluded by singing the "Marseillaise," and with hearty cheers for the Social Revolution.

S.D.F. COMMUNE CELEBRATION.—There was a crowded meeting at St. Andrews' Hall, Newman Street, on Thursday, March 19, the occasion of the Social Democratic celebration of the Commune. Barrows was "in the chair," though nobody seemed any the better on that account. Quelch who proposed the resolution, remarked "that the man who will not take the trouble to put a piece of paper into a box to record his vote, will not take the trouble to keep the barrel of a rifle clean."

"The man who will not take the trouble to put a piece of paper in the ballot box to have probably found out the fraud and is that much wiser than Quelch. G. B. Shaw made a painful effort to say something upon a subject that seemed to have but little interest for him. Connel and Hyndman both made forcible speeches which were enthusiastically received. So also was the speech of our Comrade Louise Michel, at the conclusion of which the strong Anarchist sympathies of the audience were manifested.

YARMOUTH.—March 15th.—There were commemorative meetings held morning and evening in the Gladstone Hall, and in the afternoon there was a large meeting on the Quay. The morning meeting was addressed by C. W. Mowbray, from London, whose revolutionary sentiments were received with loud applause. Some questions were asked after the address, and readily answered. Socialist songs were sung at the opening and close, accompanied by Comrade Harvey Moore on the piano. The out-door meeting was addressed by Harvey Moore, Comrade Poyntz, from Norwich, and some local comrades. These were also the speakers at the evening meeting, where revolutionary songs alternated with the speeches, making the hall ring again. At all the meetings there was a brisk sale of "Freedom, Commune of Paris, Wage System, Workman's Question, and Commonwealth."

HULL.—Here the comrades commemorated the Commune all the week. March 18th.—International Club Members held a meeting, Sunday, March 22nd.—A new and splendid banner, with the motto, "Workers of all countries, Unite," was unfurled at the morning open-air commemoration meeting on Drypool Green. Speakers were Andrew Hall, from Sheffield, J. Sketchley, and Gustav Smith. In the evening, at the same place, another meeting was held, these being the beginning of the open-air campaign this year. March 21st.—J. Sketchley lectured on "The Paris Commune" before a large and enthusiastic audience. This meeting concluded with dancing and singing. We note that the comrades at Hull have copied our sketch of "What the Communes of 1871 Were" on the backs of their handbills.

MANCHESTER.—At the I. W. M. Club, 25, Bury New road, March 21st, a public meeting in memory of the Paris Commune was held. Speakers: Shure, Diemshitz, Feigenbaum, Stockton, and Barton. The club was crowded to overflowing, so that the late comers had to remain on the stairs. A resolution was passed condemning the action of the French Government of '71 against the Commune, and further, all Ionsent were appealed to for help to take revenge upon the brutal capitalist, under whose rule the Communard% were slain. The meeting closed with singing "The Marseillaise" and with three cheers for the Social Revolution. Much literature sold, including three dozen of our new pamphlet.

A commemoration meeting was also held at the looms of the Socialist League, Grosvenor Street.

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE.-March 22nd, Comrade Kaper opened a discussion on the Paris Commune. The opening was a very interesting review of the Commune and the events which led up to it. Great interest was evinced by the asking of many questions afterwards.

NORWICH.-March 22nd, a large open-air morning meeting in Market Place was hold to commemorate "The Commune of Paris." Speakers, Sutton and Swash. Much literature was sold, and great enthusiasm shown by the audience. An evening commemoration was arranged, but, owing to the bad weather, was not so successful. It was addressed by C. Mowbray and others.

EDINBURGH.-March 17th. the Scottish' Socialist Federation celebrated the Paris Commune" in Labour Hall. A member of the Commune, Leo Melliet, was in the chair. Phillipe Lebeau, who had been transported for his share in the memorable event, was also present. Revolutionary speeches and songs, as usual.

THE BRISTOL SOCIALISTS celebrated the 20th Anniversary of the Paris Commune on 20th March, when an interesting lecture was given by Edward J. Watson, Fabian Society. J. Sharland, A.S.E., presided. The lecturer, after giving a graphic description of the revolt of the 18th March, dwelt upon the construction of the Commune and the acts performed by it. He did not believe the uprising was a failure, for we were now reaping some of the fruits from the seeds fertilised by the blood of the Communards. Mistakes no doubt were made, but education teaches us to avoid those pitfalls in the event of power being again seized by the proletariat. A spirited discussion followed, the point of dispute principally turning on the action of the noble French guards. and what would probably be the outcome if British troops were in the same position. The general idea was, that the English soldiers would be rather enemies of the people than anything else.

DUBLIN.-The Dublin Socialist Union held all anniversary meeting in commemoration of the Commune of Paris on Thursday, March 19th, at 87, Marlboro' Street. Addresses ,it the work of the Commune, its sacrifices, the reasons of its failure, were delivered by T. Fitzpatrick, O. Gorman, Hamilton, Wechsleder, and Nordbohm. Tile speech of Wechsleder was very impressive.

FRENCH ANARCHISTS AND THE CONSCRIPTION.

THE progress of our ideas amongst the conscripts and the army generally in France continues. In France, as in most continental countries, every young man of sound bodily health, has to draw lots to see

(TO BE CONTINUED)